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FEBRUARY 25TH, 1850.

The REV. HUMPHREY LLOYD, D. D., PRESIDENT,
in the Chair.

The Secretary read an Eulogium on the late Richard Kirwan, Esq., LL.D., by Dr. Pickells, of Cork.

Mr. Kirwan had been educated for the Bar, and practised for some time this honourable profession, but having unexpectedly succeeded to an ample patrimonial income by the death of his elder brother, who was killed in a rencontre while in the act of entering the Irish House of Commons, a new direction was given to his views and energies, and thenceforward he devoted himself in dignified retirement to the pursuits of science. The sciences to which Mr. Kirwan more particularly applied himself were chemistry, mineralogy, including geology, and meteorology ; and that his contributions to each of these departments of natural knowledge were of the highest importance cannot be doubted, although his name is not connected with any of those transcendent or dazzling discoveries which secure immortality for their author, and mark, as it were, an era in the intellectual progress of the human race. In chemistry his researches were numerous and valuable in a high degree. By him, for the first time, the phenomena usually referred to double elective affinity were studied with accuracy and success, and the attention of chemists fixed upon the antagonist forces, which he distinguished by the terms *Quiescent* and *Divellent*. He even attempted to assign measures of the degree of the affinity between acids and bases, an effort which, had it been successful, would have raised chemistry to the rank of the more exact physical sciences, and have brought its results within the domain of mathematical calculation.

In an early communication to this Academy he explained very accurate methods of determining the strength of the

mineral acids so much employed in medicine and the arts. In his essays on the alkaline substances used in bleaching, he pointed out the resinous nature of the colouring matter of linen yarn, and established, as he conceived, the fact,—important in a national point of view,—that the linen manufacture of Ireland is altogether independent of foreign salts or ashes for the purposes of bleaching. Next followed his experiments on the proportions of carbon in bitumen and mineral coal, and his essays on the analysis of soils, and the nature and manner of action of the manures best suited to each locality. From this enumeration of his chemical labours, they would appear to have been chiefly directed to objects of immediate practical utility. This, however, was not always the case, for he turned special attention to one of the most difficult departments of the doctrine of caloric, and communicated a table of specific heats, which was published by Magellan, and had some celebrity.

Chemists of the present time, who know in what a chaotic state their science was in the days of Kirwan, will not hesitate to award to him the merit of having been an acute reasoner and a laborious experimenter ; and will not, looking to the period in which he lived, consider it any serious reproach to him, that he was a strenuous supporter to the last of the phlogistic theory, which, however, it must be confessed he continued to maintain long after any satisfactory evidence could be adduced in support of it.

In the department of mineralogy the exertions of Mr. Kirwan may be said to have had a national importance. To him is undoubtedly due the merit of having introduced the study into this country. The celebrated Leskean collection, in the possession of the Dublin Society, was acquired through Mr. Kirwan, who passed over to Germany for the purpose of purchasing it ; and, as Inspector-General of Irish mines, he addressed an able memorial to the Irish Government, pointing out the economic importance of mineralogical science, and bespeaking for it support and encouragement.

The advancement of the study of meteorology was with Mr. Kirwan a favourite object, and he devoted to it much attention. Adopting the formula of Mayer, he constructed a table showing the temperature of every latitude between the Equator and the Pole, and endeavoured to show that it was in accordance with observations.

In his essay on "the variations of the atmosphere," he studied the subject of temperature as affected by elevation, and other correlative topics of high interest; and was one of the first to suggest, as a means of improving meteorological science, the establishment of corresponding societies in different parts of the world, pointing out the important results to be anticipated from a combined system of observation. In connexion with his meteorological labours, it will not be out of place to mention that he published "Thoughts on Magnetism," his views in relation to the aurora borealis, a design for an anemometer, which has been praised by Howard, and numerous other papers on subjects of minor importance.

Dr. Pickells, in conclusion, observes: "With every disposition to celebrate his worth, it would, after all, be presumptuous to deny that the task of rendering full justice to merit so varied and transcendent will still await and solicit the execution of a more competent hand. Meanwhile departed genius will not disdain this humble tribute at its tomb. Thirty years* have now elapsed since that tomb closed upon the remains of the illustrious Kirwan, but his memory cannot fade with the lapse of time. The gratitude of mankind will attest his services; and history, in tracing the progress of those sciences which he cultivated, and to the prosecution of which by others he gave so powerful an impulse, will perpetuate to late posterity the honours of his name."

* Dr. Pickell's paper was first read before the Chemical Section of the British Association for the advancement of Science, in Cork, in the year 1843.

As an appendix to this abstract of Dr. Pickells' memoir, it will be proper to mention that Mr. Kirwan, for some papers read by him before the Royal Society, at the very commencement of his scientific career, was voted the Copley Medal; and that he was immediately afterwards elected President of this Academy; a distinction with which he continued to be honoured up to the period of his death.

Sir William Betham exhibited an impression of an ancient seal, lately found near Beverley in Yorkshire, on which is represented a mounted cavalier with a very long sword drawn in his hand, round which is the following inscription :

S. BRIEN. REGIS . DE KENEL.
EOGAIN.

Brien O'Neill was King of Kinel Owen, or Tyrone, from A. D. 1241 to 1260, when, along with many others of the Irish chieftains, he was slain in the battle of Drom Deirg, or Down. His head was cut off and sent to King Henry III. ; and probably this seal fell into the hands of the English victors, who carried it to England, and this accounts for its being found in Yorkshire.

The Annals of the Four Masters have the following account of the battle.

1260.—“The battle of Drom Deirg, at Downpatrick, was fought by Brien O'Neill and Hugh O'Conor (King of Connaught) against the English of the north of Ireland, in which many of the Irish chiefs were slain, namely, Brien O'Neill, the chief ruler of Ireland ; Donall O'Cairre, Dermot M'Loughlin, Manus O'Cahan, Cane O'Henery, Donslevy MacCan, Conor O'Duvdirma, and his son, Hugh O'Cahan ; Murtoth O'Ca-